

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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REGULATION OF EXPLICIT CONTENT ON OTT PLATFORMS

Context

- Recently, the Supreme Court of India has taken a significant step by **issuing notices to the Central Government** and other stakeholders regarding a plea to regulate sexually explicit content on **Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms and social media**.

Rapid Growth of OTT Platforms in India

- The rapid growth of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms in India has revolutionized entertainment, offering diverse content to millions of viewers.
- With increasing internet penetration, affordable data, and a shift in consumer preferences, OTT platforms have emerged as a dominant force in digital media consumption.

Current Regulatory Framework

- IT Rules, 2021:** OTT platforms are governed by the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**.
 - These rules mandate content classification, parental controls, and a three-tier grievance redressal mechanism.
- Content Classification:** Content is categorized based on age suitability, such as U (Universal), U/A 7+, U/A 13+, and A (Adult).
 - Platforms must display content ratings and provide parental locks for adult content.
- Grievance Redressal:** A **three-tier mechanism** includes self-regulation by platforms, an industry-level body, and oversight by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B).
 - Platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime follow self-regulatory frameworks such as the Digital Publishers Content Grievances Council (DPCGC).
- Over-the-Top Platforms Regulatory Authority Bill, 2021:** It proposed to establish an **Over-the-Top (OTT) Platforms Regulatory Authority** to ensure complete ban on showing violent, abusive and vulgar web series, films or such other similar content on OTT Platforms in the country and for matters connected therewith.
 - However, it **lapsed** with the dissolution of the 17th Lok Sabha.
- Cinematograph Act, 1952 (Amendments for OTT Platforms):** The proposed amendments to the Cinematograph Act, 1952 seek to bring OTT platforms under the same regulatory framework as theatrical films, subjecting digital content to

age-based certification and censorship norms to ensure parity and accountability across media formats.

Supreme Court's Intervention & Observation

- A Supreme Court's Bench acknowledged the seriousness of the issue but emphasized that **Regulation of OTT Platforms in India** falls within the domain of the **Executive and Legislature**.
- In Apoorva Arora v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi (2024) Case, Court emphasized the **need for objective criteria to determine obscenity**, focusing on whether content arouses sexual or lustful thoughts rather than the perceived decency of language.
 - However, subjective interpretation remains a challenge.

Challenges in Regulation

- Balancing Freedom and Responsibility:** OTT platforms operate on the principle of creative freedom, making outright censorship a contentious issue.
 - Striking a balance between freedom of expression and responsible content governance is a key challenge.
- Global Platforms, Local Norms:** Many OTT platforms are global entities, complicating the enforcement of India-specific regulations.
- Large Scale Content:** The sheer volume of content uploaded daily makes monitoring and regulation a daunting task.

Proposed Measures

- Stricter Guidelines:** The government may introduce stricter content guidelines, focusing on explicit material and its accessibility.
- Enhanced Oversight:** Strengthening the role of the Ministry of I&B in monitoring content and ensuring compliance with ethical standards.
- National Content Control Authority (NCCA):** Need for establishment of NCCA to regulate objectionable material and prevent its unrestricted spread.
- Public Awareness:** Educating viewers about content ratings and parental controls to promote responsible consumption.

Source: IE

11TH BRICS LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT MINISTERS' MEETING

Context

- 11th BRICS Labour & Employment Ministers' Meeting 2025 has adopted the **Declaration Under Brazilian Presidency**.

About

- The meeting, convened under the slogan “**Strengthening the Cooperation of the Global South for More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance**”.
- **The declaration addresses two pivotal themes:** “Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Future of Work” and “The Impacts of Climate Change on the World of Work and a Just Transition”.
- **The declaration commits BRICS nations to:**
 - ♦ Promote inclusive AI policies that balance innovation with worker protection.
 - ♦ Advance social dialogue to ensure fair climate transitions.
 - ♦ Strengthen South-South cooperation on labour governance, digital inclusion, and green job creation.
- **A major decision was the creation of a Policy Observatory**, a platform for exchanging experiences on decent work and social protection.

Major Challenges Faced by Workers

- **Artificial intelligence is radically reshaping labor relations:** While technology creates new opportunities, it also brings risks such as job displacement and growing inequalities.
- **Ministers expressed concern over disparities among BRICS nations**, particularly in access to digital infrastructure, availability and quality of education.
- **Focus on Vulnerable Groups:** Women, Youth, Older workers, Persons with disabilities are more vulnerable to disruptions caused by automation and adverse effects of climate change.
- **Climate Change and Employment:** The transition to a low-carbon economy presents both challenges and job creation opportunities.
 - ♦ Millions of green jobs could be generated, but only with appropriate training.

Suggestions

- Implementation of workforce reskilling programs.
- Strengthening partnerships between universities and private sector companies.
- Investing in digital literacy and future-ready skills development.
- Updating occupational safety and health standards to protect workers exposed to extreme climate conditions.
- Investment in adaptive strategies to future-proof the workforce.

Conclusion

- Representatives from labor unions and international organizations emphasized the need

for more equitable global governance and called for the reform of institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank to address poverty and promote decent work.

- They also underscored the importance of climate financing and policies to prevent setbacks.

BRICS

- **BRICS** is an acronym that refers to a group of **five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa**.
 - ♦ **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates** have joined BRICS as new full members.
- The term was originally coined by economist **Jim O'Neill in 2001**.
- BRICS brings together five of the largest developing countries of the world, representing around **41%** of the global population, around **24%** of the global GDP and around **16%** of global trade.
- **Economic growth:** All members are projected to grow in 2024, with rates ranging from 1.1% to 6.1% (IMF).
- **Origin:** As a formal grouping, BRIC started after the meeting of the Leaders of Russia, India and China in St. Petersburg on the margins of the **G8 Outreach Summit in 2006**.
 - ♦ The grouping was formalized during the 1st meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers on the margins of **UNGA in New York in 2006**.
 - ♦ Initially, the grouping was termed BRIC as **South Africa was inducted in 2010** and from there on it has been referred to as **BRICS**.
- **Summits:** The governments of the BRICS states have met annually at formal summits **since 2009**.
- BRICS countries have come together to deliberate on important issues under the **three pillars of:**
 - ♦ political and security,
 - ♦ economic and financial and
 - ♦ cultural and people-to-people exchanges.
- **New Development Bank:** Formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, is a multilateral development bank established by the BRICS states.
 - ♦ The Bank shall support public or private projects through loans, guarantees, equity participation and other financial instruments.

Source: PIB

INDIA, FRANCE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON RAFALE-M JETS FOR NAVY

Context

- **India and France** formally concluded an **Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA)**, valued at nearly 64,000 crore, to procure **26 Rafale-M fighter jets for the Indian Navy**.
 - ♦ G2G is a mode of **defence procurement** involving **direct negotiation between the government** of the importer country with that of the exporter country.

Major Highlights of the Agreement

- Deliveries are set to begin from **mid-2028** and **likely to be completed by 2030**.
- It includes **26 Rafale-M aircraft**, it also covers **training of crew members in both France and India**.
 - ♦ The package includes **extra equipment for the existing Rafale fleet of the Indian Air Force**.
- **Transfer of Technology:** The ToT provisions for the **integration of indigenous weapons** such as the **Astra Beyond Visual Range (BVR) air-to-air missile on the Rafale aircraft**.
 - ♦ It also includes the establishment of a production facility for the Rafale fuselage in India, as well as **Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO)** facilities for aircraft engines, sensors, and weapons.
- **Significance:** This initiative is expected to generate thousands of jobs and create significant revenue for numerous Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in India.

Modernising Indian Navy's Requirements

- **The Indian Navy currently operates two aircraft carriers:** INS Vikramaditya, which was acquired from Russia, and INS Vikrant, which was indigenously developed and commissioned in 2022.
 - ♦ These carriers currently operate the MiG-29K fighter jets, 45 of which were procured from Russia.
- **Due to their low availability rates** and the **approaching end of their service life**, the Navy sought to **acquire a new fleet of carrier-based fighter jets**.
 - ♦ Although the original plan was to **acquire 54 jets**, the number was reduced to 26

following the DRDO's proposal to **develop the indigenous Twin Engine Deck-Based Fighter (TEDBF)**.

- The Indian armed forces will also receive **31 MQ-9B armed High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS)** under a deal with the U.S.
 - ♦ Of the 31 RPAS, also known as Sea Guardians, 15 are meant for the Navy and eight each for the Army and IAF.
 - ♦ Deliveries are scheduled between January 2029 and September 2030.

Source: TH

GUIDELINES FOR SETTING UP BIO-RESOURCE CENTRES

In News

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has come up with the guidelines for setting up of **bio-input resource centres (BRC)** under the **National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF)**.

Key Highlights of the Guidelines

- **Financial Assistance:** 1 lakh per BRC, provided in two installments of 50,000 each.
 - ♦ Assistance excludes costs like sheds, land rental, or permanent infrastructure.
- **Purpose of BRCs:** Facilitate cluster-level production and availability of natural farming bio-inputs.
 - ♦ Act as knowledge hubs for disseminating practices and solutions related to natural farming.
 - ♦ Tailor bio-inputs according to local soil, crops, and land-use patterns.
- **Eligibility:** BRCs must be run by entrepreneur groups already practising natural farming.
 - ♦ If unavailable, the state natural farming cell will identify and onboard farmers willing to transition.
- **Affordability Focus:** Inputs produced and sold must remain affordable for small and marginal farmers.
- **Integration with Other Schemes:** Emphasis on convergence with programmes like the Formation and Promotion of 10,000 FPOs, National Mission on Edible Oilseeds, etc.

Significance of the BRC Guidelines under NMNF

- BRCs will locally produce and supply ready-to-use inputs.

- Will promote cluster-based collective efforts, enhancing access to markets and reducing costs.
- BRCs will help scale up natural and organic farming by ensuring quality inputs and region-specific formulations.

About National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF)

- **Type:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare
- **Launch Date:** November 25, 2024
- **Primary Objective:** Promote nature-based, sustainable systems of farming
 - ♦ Reduce dependence on chemical inputs
- **Implementation Target (Next 2 Years):** To be implemented in 15,000 clusters of willing Gram Panchayats
 - ♦ Reach out to 1 crore farmers
 - ♦ Cover 7.5 lakh hectares of agricultural land

Source: DTE

NATIONAL MISSION FOR CLEAN GANGA GETS TAX EXEMPTION STATUS

In News

- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has granted tax exemption to the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) by notifying it as an authority under **clause 46A of Section 10 of the Income Tax Act, 1961**.

About Section 10 of the Income Tax Act

- **Section 10 of the Income Tax Act, 1961**, lays out different types of income that can be exempt from taxes, with the goal of easing the financial load on certain entities.
- The **Clause (46A)** in this section grants **tax exemptions to statutory bodies or authorities** that are set up **under Central or State Acts**, as long as they are working for public purposes.
- This rule helps these authorities make **better use of their funds by relieving them of income tax obligations**, which in turn encourages them to achieve their goals without being held back by financial issues.

Do you know?

- The **Ganga River basin** is the **largest in India**, encompassing **27% of the country's land mass** and **supporting about 47% of its population**.

- ♦ It is a trans-boundary river forming the world's largest delta, **Sunderbans**, spread across India and Bangladesh.

- Spanning over 11 states, the basin covers nearly 27% of India's total geographical area.
- The majority of the basin, **around 65.57%**, is used for **agriculture**, while water **bodies cover 3.47% of the area**.
- Despite receiving 35.5% of the total water input in terms of precipitation, the Ganga River Basin is the second most water-stressed basin in India, following the Sabarmati Basin, with only 39% of the average per capita annual rainwater input among major Indian river basins.









National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)

- It was established as a society in 2011 under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**, and initially served as the implementation arm of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA).
 - ♦ After NGRBA was dissolved on 7th October 2016, the **National Ganga Council** was formed to oversee the rejuvenation and protection of the Ganga River.
- The key framework for the Ganga rejuvenation includes a five-tier structure at the national, state, and district levels to combat pollution and ensure adequate water flow.
- **The structure consists of the National Ganga Council** chaired by the Prime Minister of India.
 - ♦ Empowered Task Force (ETF) chaired by the Union Minister of Jal Shakti.
 - ♦ National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).
 - ♦ State Ganga Committees.
 - ♦ District Ganga Committees in regions along the Ganga and its tributaries.
- NMCG has a two-tier management structure, consisting of a Governing Council and an Executive Committee, both headed by the Director General (DG) of NMCG. The Executive Committee can approve projects up to 1000 crore.

Related Steps

- 'Namami Gange Programme', is an Integrated Conservation Mission, approved as 'Flagship Programme' by the Union Government in June 2014 with budget outlay of Rs.20,000 Crore to accomplish the twin objectives of **effective abatement of pollution**, conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga.

• Main pillars :

 Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure	 River-Front Development
 River-Surface Cleaning	 Bio-Diversity
 Afforestation	 Public Awareness
 Industrial Effluent Monitoring	 Ganga Gram

Source : IE

GREEN HYDROGEN PRODUCTION

Context

- Researchers have uncovered new insights into proton adsorption on catalyst surfaces, paving the way for more efficient electrocatalysts for green hydrogen production.

What is hydrogen?

- Hydrogen is the chemical element with the **symbol H** and **atomic number 1**.
- Hydrogen is the **lightest element** and the most abundant chemical substance in the universe, **constituting roughly 75%** of all normal matter.
- It is colorless, odorless, tasteless, non-toxic, and highly combustible gas.

Hydrogen Colour	Mode of Production	Fuel	Carbon Intensity
Green Hydrogen	Electrolysis	Electricity from Wind, Solar, Geothermal, Tidal, Hydro	Near zero
Purple/Pink Hydrogen		Nuclear heat and electricity/Nuclear electricity in electrolysis	
Yellow Hydrogen		Solar electricity	
Blue Hydrogen	Steam Methane Reforming, Gasification + CCS	Natural gas and coal	Low
Turquoise Hydrogen	Pyrolysis	Natural gas	Medium/low – solid carbon by-product
Grey Hydrogen	Steam methane reforming (SMR)		Medium
Brown Hydrogen	Gasification	Coal – Brown: Lignite, Black: Black coal	Highest
Black Hydrogen			

What is Green Hydrogen?

- Green Hydrogen:** The hydrogen produced via **electrolysis**, the splitting of water into hydrogen and oxygen with electricity generated from renewable energy sources such as solar or wind, is known as Green hydrogen.
- MNRE defines** Green Hydrogen as having a well-to-gate emission (i.e., including water treatment, electrolysis, gas purification, drying and compression of hydrogen) of **not more than 2 kg CO₂ equivalent / kg H₂**.
- Gujarat's Kandla port** is the first in India to have an operational Green Hydrogen plant using indigenous Electrolysers.

Challenges

- Risks associated with the transportation:** Hydrogen in gaseous form is highly inflammable

and difficult to transport, thereby making safety a primary concern.

- High Production Costs:** The **levelized cost of electricity (LCOE)** and **electrolyzer costs** are major factors driving up the overall production costs.
- Disparity in Production Costs:** A substantial disparity between **green hydrogen production costs (\$5.30- \$6.70 per kg)** and traditional grey/blue hydrogen production costs (\$1.9-\$2.4 per kg).
- Technological Readiness:** The adoption rates and risk factors associated with futuristic technologies pose challenges for financing and scaling up production.

National Green Hydrogen Mission

- The mission was launched in **2023** with an outlay of **Rs. 19,744 crores**.
- It aims to make India a Global Hub for production, utilization and export of Green Hydrogen and its derivatives.
- The **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)** will be responsible for overall coordination and implementation of the Mission.
- Under the **Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition Programme (SIGHT)**, two distinct financial incentive mechanisms – targeting domestic manufacturing of electrolyzers and production of Green Hydrogen – will be provided under the Mission.



Source: PIB

GREENHOUSE GASES EMISSIONS INTENSITY TARGETS

Context

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has notified the draft Greenhouse Gases Emissions Intensity (GEI) Target Rules, 2025.

What is Greenhouse Gases Emissions Intensity (GEI)?

- GEI refers to the amount of greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted per unit of product output (e.g., per tonne of cement or aluminium).
- GHGs include **carbon dioxide (CO₂)**, **methane (CH₄)**, **nitrous oxide (N₂O)**, **ozone (O₃)**, and **water vapour**, along with synthetic gases like **chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)** and **hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs)**.
- GEI is measured in **tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂e)**, a standard unit accounting for the global warming potential of all GHGs.

Draft GEI target Rules

- The emissions intensity targets, with 2023–24 as the baseline year and **2025–26 and 2026–27 as the target years**, aim at the gradual reduction of emissions intensity to promote low-carbon industrial growth.
- The draft rules **target 282 industrial units** across four highly energy-intensive sectors: 13 aluminium plants, 186 cement plants, 53 pulp and paper plants, and 30 chlor-alkali plants.
- Alignment with National Climate Goals:** It supports India's commitment to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by **45% by 2030** compared to 2005 levels.

Government Initiatives

- The Perform Achieve and Trade (PAT) Scheme** was initiated in the year **2012** and is a market-based mechanism aimed to improve energy efficiency in energy-intensive industries by notifying specific energy consumption reduction targets to industries (called Designated Consumers or DCs).
- Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), 2023** provides a platform to generate, trade, and utilise carbon credits. The entities that reduce emissions below targets can sell surplus credits.

Carbon Markets

- Carbon markets are systems designed to place a price on carbon emissions and create economic incentives for emission reduction, also known as **'carbon credits'**.
- A carbon credit is a kind of tradable permit that, per **United Nations standards**, equals one tonne of carbon dioxide removed, reduced, or sequestered from the atmosphere.
- Under **Article 17 of the Kyoto Protocol**, countries with surplus emission allowances can sell them to those exceeding their targets, creating an international carbon market.

Voluntary Offsets

- Voluntary offsets refer to **measures undertaken by private individuals**, including afforestation, that can trap carbon dioxide as commercial projects.
- These too generate carbon credits and companies sell them, internationally as of now, to those that require them to meet the compliance regulations.

Concluding remarks

- The draft GEI Target Rules mark a significant step in transitioning India's industrial sector toward low-carbon development.
- By combining mandatory targets with a market-driven approach, India is aligning environmental sustainability with economic efficiency — a crucial balance for achieving its climate ambitions.

Source: IE

NEWS IN SHORT

TIEXIAN REEF (SANDY CAY REEF)

Context

- The South China Sea dispute has intensified as China and the Philippines assert claims over Tiexian Reef (Sandy Cay Reef).

About

- **Location:** it is a part of the Spratly Islands chain in the South China Sea.
 - ♦ It lies close to **Thitu Island (Pag-asa)**, which is under Philippine control.
- China refers to **Tiexian Reef** as part of **Nansha Islands** and Philippines refers to it as **Sandy Cay**.
- The reef is partially **submerged at high tide** and **consists of sandbars** that occasionally rise above sea level.
- **Strategic Importance:** Control of the reef allows for increased military and surveillance capability in the region.

Source: TH

SUPREME COURT SAYS 'SHARIA COURT' HAVE NO LEGAL RECOGNITION

In News

- The Supreme Court ruled that **Sharia Courts or Courts of Kazi** have **no legal recognition** in India and their decisions are not binding.

Sharia courts

- They are informal Islamic forums led by a Qazi that interpret Shariat (Islamic law based on the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed) to provide guidance on personal matters like **marriage, divorce, inheritance, and maintenance**.
- They serve mainly as arbitration centers, especially for the economically disadvantaged.

- However, their decisions are not legally binding or enforceable, and any party dissatisfied with their ruling can seek recourse in regular courts.

Supreme Court's Recent ruling

- The Court cited the **2014 Vishva Lochan Madan case** and clarified that any decisions from such bodies are **valid only if voluntarily accepted** by the concerned parties and not in conflict with existing laws.
- It granted maintenance to a Muslim woman whose husband had sought divorce through a Sharia court.

Source :TH

SMILE SCHEME

Context

- As per the Union Social Justice Ministry, the **SMILE scheme has identified fewer than 10,000 people engaged in begging**.

About

- **Scheme Name:** Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE).
- **Launch Year:** 2022.
- **Implementing Ministry:** Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
 - ♦ One of its components was the sub-scheme to **identify, profile, and rehabilitate individuals** engaged in the act of begging with their consent.
 - ♦ The other component of the scheme is for the **empowerment of transgender persons**.
- **Objectives:** Make religious, tourist, and historical urban spaces **"beggary-free"**.
 - ♦ Rehabilitate at least 8,000 individuals **over FY 2023–24 to FY 2025–26**.
- **Implementation Phases:** **Phase 1:** Began in 30 cities (e.g., Ayodhya, Amritsar, New Delhi, Kolkata, Lucknow).
 - ♦ **Phase 2:** Expanded to 50 more cities in the second year.
- **Key Data (as of December 31, 2024):** Identified Individuals Engaged in Begging: 9,958 persons across 81 major cities/towns.
 - ♦ **Rehabilitated Individuals:** 970 persons (including 352 children).
 - ♦ **2011 Census Data:** 3.72 lakh beggars recorded nationwide.
 - ♦ **Socio-Economic and Caste Census 2011:** 6.62 lakh rural households reliant on begging or alms.

Source: TH

GEOTAGGING OF LAC

In News

- India is geotagging patrolling points and landmarks along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

Do you know?

- The LAC is the demarcation that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory.
- India considers the LAC to be 3,488 km long, while the Chinese consider it to be only around 2,000 km.
- It is divided into three sectors:
 - the **eastern sector** which spans Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim,
 - the **middle sector** in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, and
 - the **western sector** in Ladakh.

Geotagging

- It is a process of adding geographical identification to various media like photography.
 - It helps organize and share content by location.
- It has applications in areas like disaster management, agriculture, and urban planning.

Latest Developments

- Geotagging of LAC will clearly demarcate the boundary with China, improve patrolling efficiency, and avoid clashes.
- This effort follows an October 2023 agreement between **Indian and Chinese negotiators leading to troop disengagement** and resolution of issues stemming from the 2020 standoff.
- Measures now include limited patrolling (twice a month), pre-shared patrol plans, avoidance of physical contact, and structured interactions between military officers of both sides
 - Enhanced surveillance through drones, cameras, and helicopter sorties, along with continued infrastructure development, supports these efforts.

Source: IE

REVIVE OUR OCEAN INITIATIVES

Context

- A new global initiative, 'Revive Our Ocean,' has been launched to scale up effective, community-led marine protected areas (MPAs) through local action.

About

- Objective:** To remove key barriers that prevent coastal communities from managing and conserving their marine spaces.
- Approach:** It inspires, enables, and equips communities to lead marine conservation.
 - Create a **Revive Our Ocean Collective** to connect local leaders and successful community-led marine protection models.
 - It launched a **microfinance program** to provide loans and grants for community-driven marine protection projects.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

- Ocean areas are reserved for long-term conservation of marine ecosystems, governed by national authorities, local governments, NGOs, or through community co-management.
- Current Status:** Over **16,000** MPAs established globally, covering about **8%** of the world's oceans.
 - However only **3%** of oceans are under full protection.
- Global Target:** The 30X30 target of the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)** aims to protect **30 percent** of the oceans by **2030**.

Examples of Community-led MPAs

- In the Philippines,** RARE's Fish Forever program has helped over 2,000 communities set up no-fishing zones.
- Medes Island, Spain:** A no-fishing zone of **1 sq. km** has generated **€16 million** annually from diving tourism, **25 times** the income from fishing.
- Isle of Arran, Scotland:** Creation of a no-fishing zone led to a doubling of seabed life and spillover benefits to nearby waters.

Source: DTE

SIMILIPAL TIGER RESERVE (STR)

Context

- The **Odisha** government notified the **Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR)**, the world's only home to **wild melanistic tigers, as a national park**.

About

- It is the **107th national park and the second in the state**, after **Bhitarkanika**.
- Proposed in 1980**, the intention to declare Similipal as a National Park remained pending for over four decades.

About Similipal

- Similipal, located in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, is home to **40 royal Bengal tigers**, shelter to **25% of Odisha's elephant population** and **104 orchid species**, many endemic to the region.
 - It is a haven for over **360 species of birds**, and diverse mammals like leopards, sambar, and mugger crocodiles.
- The forests of Similipal are a mix of sal trees, moist deciduous, and semi-evergreen types.
- The tigers of Similipal possess **higher-than-normal levels of melanin**, giving them coats that are more black with yellow stripes.
 - The pseudo-melanistic tiger is a colour variant of the Bengal tiger.
 - Its strange coat is a result of a mutation in a particular gene.



Source: IE

SPIDERS ENGINEER WEBS TO COMBAT CITY NOISE: STUDY

Context

- A new study published in **Current Biology** by researchers from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln reveals how **funnel-weaving spiders (Agelenopsis pennsylvanica)** adapt their webs to cope with urban noise pollution.

Key Findings

- Urban spiders build webs that dampen a broad range of vibratory frequencies (300–1,000 Hz) to reduce sensory overload.
- Rural spiders design webs that amplify biologically relevant long-distance vibrations (350–600 Hz), enhancing prey detection.
- Spiders don't have ears, they use web vibrations to detect prey. The web acts as a sensory extension.

Implications for Urban Wildlife

- Spiders demonstrate behavioral plasticity—adapting web-building in response to environmental stressors like noise.
- Raises questions about how urbanisation alters animal behavior and evolutionary pathways.

Source: TH

MILITARY EXPENDITURE REPORT BY SIPRI

In News

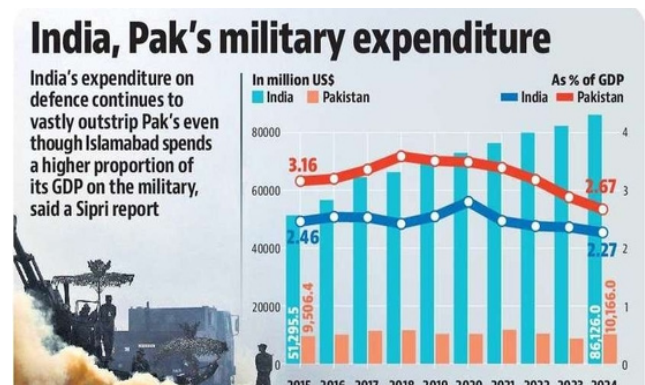
- According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India's military spending in 2024 reached \$86.1 billion nearly nine times Pakistan's \$10.2 billion.

SIPRI Military Expenditure Database

- It provides consistent military spending data for countries from 1949 to 2024, updated annually.
- It includes figures in local currency, constant and current US dollars, and as shares of GDP, government expenditure, and per capita, mostly aligned to calendar years.

Key Findings of recent report

- Global military spending reached a **record \$2,718 billion in 2024**.



- ♦ The global military burden rose to **2.5% of GDP**.
- Europe was the biggest driver, increasing spending by 17% due to the war in Ukraine.
- The top five military spenders (U.S., China, Russia, Germany, and India) accounted for **60% of global defence expenditure**.
- **China** spent \$314 billion, **dominating Asia's military spending**, while Russia's expenditure surged 38% to \$149 billion amid the ongoing Ukraine war.
- Ukraine spent \$64.7 billion, **representing 34% of its GDP** — the highest military burden globally.

Source :TH

PADMA AWARDS

Context

- The President of India presented **Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri Awards** for the year **2025** at the Civil Investiture Ceremony-I held at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

About

- **Padma Awards**: One of the highest civilian awards of the country instituted in **1954**, are conferred in **three categories**:

- ♦ **Padma Vibhushan**: Second-highest civilian award in India.
- ♦ **Padma Bhushan**: Third-highest civilian award.
- ♦ **Padma Shri**: Fourth-highest civilian award.
- They are **awarded annually** in various disciplines and fields of activities, including art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, and civil service.
- They are announced **every year on Republic Day (January 26)**.
- Open to **all persons, regardless of race, occupation, position, or gender**.
- Can be **awarded posthumously**.
- **Selection Process**:
 - ♦ Recommendations are made by state governments, central ministries, previous awardees, and the public.
 - ♦ Managed by the Padma Awards Committee, constituted by the Prime Minister annually.
 - ♦ Committee recommendations are submitted to the Prime Minister and President for approval.

Source: PIB

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